

PART 54:

Third  
Series

JUNE,  
1893.

VOL  
9

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM  
YEAR TO YEAR."

# All the Year Round

CONDUCTED BY

## CHARLES DICKENS.

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 231.—THIRD SERIES.

SATURDAY, JUNE 3, 1893.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

### A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

*Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.*

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE clock in Mrs. Romaine's drawing-room chimed the half-hour—half-past four—and Mrs. Romaine glanced up as she heard it. She was alone, sitting at her writing-table answering invitations. She was looking better than she had looked on the preceding day—less haggard, and physically stronger—and apparently the reassertion of her physical strength was not without an effect upon its mental counterpart, for there was a singular expression of vigour and determination about her face.

She answered and put aside the last invitation-card, and then she drew out a letter in a straight, clear, girl's writing. It was signed, "Affectionately yours, Maud Pomeroy," and it bore reference to Miss Pomeroy's prospective visit to her. Mrs. Romaine glanced through it, the vigour of her face seeming to accentuate as she did so, and then proceeded to write a few cordial, affectionate lines in answer. She was just directing the envelope when a servant came in with tea.

Mrs. Romaine rose.

"Send these letters to the post," she said.

She glanced at the clock again as she spoke, and at that moment the front door-bell rang.

Left alone, Mrs. Romaine moved quickly to the looking-glass, and took an anxious, critical look at herself; it was as though she had learnt to distrust her ap-

pearance; the inspection, however, proved satisfactory, apparently; and as she turned quickly away as she heard steps upon the stairs, there was a certain self-dependence and sense of power in the bright, expectant keenness of her eyes.

"Mr. Loring!" announced the servant, and Mr. Loring followed his name into the room.

"I am very glad to see you," said Mrs. Romaine, advancing to meet him with a pretty cordiality. "This is a much better way of welcoming a friend than our meeting yesterday. I think I shall celebrate the occasion by saying not at home to any one else. Julian will be in perhaps, and he will like to have you to himself. Not at home, Dawson," she added in conclusion, turning to the maid.

There was a verve and brightness about her manner which was not exactly its usual vivacity, and which faintly, and all unconsciously, suggested the presence of some kind of special excitement in her mind.

Loring's perceptions were in a state of rather abnormal acuteness; the situation had meanings for him, which had braced up his forces not inconsiderably. He detected that inward excitement about Mrs. Romaine instantly, and he was convinced also, though he could hardly have given a reason for the conviction, that there was not the smallest chance of Julian's appearance. Both circumstances he reckoned as points in his favour in the game he was going to play.

"It's very charming of you," he said. "Do you know this is the first time I have really felt that coming back to London means—something."

He took the chair she had indicated to him on the other side of the little tea-

table as he spoke, and there was nothing lame or unfinished about the words spoken as he spoke them. His eyes were fixed upon Mrs. Romaine, but she was pouring out tea with so intent a look on her face as almost to suggest preoccupation. She did not look up, nor did the tone of his voice reach her, except superficially, apparently, for she replied with a pleasant, friendly laugh.

"I should hope it did mean 'something,' indeed," she said. "Friends should count for 'something,' surely, especially when they have really taken the trouble to miss you very much. Have you had such an unusually fascinating time in Africa, then?"

She handed him a cup of tea, and as he rose to take it from her, he answered:

"Well, not exactly that. I'm afraid I don't believe in fascinating times, you know. Perhaps I am too much of a pessimist."

He spoke with that tone of personal revelation and confidence which is always more or less attractive to a woman, coming from a man; and Mrs. Romaine responded with the gentle loftiness of sympathy which the position demanded. If the tone sat a little artificially upon her, it certainly did not betray itself in any want of kindness.

"I've often been afraid you felt like that," she said. "And it is really quite wrong of you, don't you know. You ought to be such a particularly well-satisfied person! I suppose you are horribly ambitious? Now tell me, has your business gone off as well as you hoped? I have been so interested in your delightful articles!"

"Does anything go off as well as one had hoped?" was the reply, spoken with a cynical smile, indeed, but with a certain daring deprecation of her disapproval, which was not unattractive. "No, I ought not to carp," he continued quickly. "I have every reason to be satisfied."

His tone implied considerably more in the way of success and latent possibilities about his present position than the words themselves conveyed, and Mrs. Romaine answered with cordial, delicately expressed congratulations, which drifted into a species of general questionings as to his doings, less directly personal, but implying that he might count on her sympathy if he chose to confide in her in greater detail. This was no part of Loring's plan, however. He led by almost imperceptible

degrees away from the subject, and before very long they were talking London gossip as though he had never been away, the only perceptible result of his absence evincing itself in the touch of additional intimacy which his return seemed to have given their relations, necessarily at Mrs. Romaine's instigation.

The talk touched here and there, and by-and-by an enquiry from Loring after a mutual friend elicited a crisper laugh than usual, and an expressive movement of the eyebrows, from Mrs. Romaine.

"Haven't you heard?" she said. "Oh, it's an old story now, of course! Well, they don't come to town this season, I believe. Lady Ashton suffers from—neuralgia!"

She laughed again, and then in response to a cynical and incredulously interrogative ejaculation from Loring, she clasped her hands lightly on her knee and went on with the animation of a woman who has a good story to tell and enjoys telling it.

"She contracted the complaint, they say, in a poky little church in Kensington into which Gladys Ashton strolled one afternoon and got herself married. Oh, dear no! Her mother wasn't there! That's one of the points of the affair. And Lord Rochdale wasn't there either."

"Gladys Ashton jilted Rochdale after all?"

"After all!" assented Mrs. Romaine gaily. "After all that poor woman's trouble, after the quite pathetic way in which she has slaved to catch him, she gets a letter from the ungrateful girl—at an afternoon tea, too, heaps of people there—to say that she is Mrs. Bob Stewart. Baccarat Bob you wretched men at the clubs call him, don't you?"

"That was enough to induce convulsions, let alone neuralgia," commented Loring.

"Convulsions," returned Mrs. Romaine. "Oh, yes, there have been convulsions right enough. Poor old Fitzhugh has done that part of the business. Lord Rochdale had to be consoled, you see, and Mrs. Fitzhugh was an old hand at the work. 'Nous revenons toujours,' and all that, don't you know?"

They both laughed, and the laugh was succeeded by a moment's silence. Then Loring said casually:

"What has become of your cousin, Falconer, among other people, by-the-bye? I don't hear anything of him, and his grim

presence was hardly to be overlooked. Have you any little escapade of his to reveal, now?"

Mrs. Romaine laughed lightly.

"Unfortunately not," she said; and that constraint which had always been used to haunt her tone in speaking of Dennis Falconer, was no longer there. "His absence is due to the most characteristically orthodox causes. He was ill about three months ago. He went into a hospital sort of place—one of those new things—and he was rather bad. Now he's somewhere or other recovering. I fancy he won't be in London again yet."

Loring received the news with a comment as indifferent as his question had been, and then there fell a second silence. Loring's eyes, very keen and calculating, were fixed upon the carpet; on Mrs. Romaine's face was an accentuation of the intent, preoccupied look which had lain behind all her previous gaiety. The two faces suggested curiously that the man and woman alike felt individually and each irrespective of the other that something in the shape of a prologue was over, and that the real interest of the interview might begin.

The silence was broken by Mrs. Romaine; she pushed the tea-table further from her and leant comfortably—and gracefully—back in her chair, as she said casually:

"Did you and Julian meet at the club last night?"

Loring followed her example and took an easier and more careless pose.

"Yes!" he said. "We had an hour's talk together. I was very glad I had looked in. I hardly expected to find him there!"

Mrs. Romaine laughed and the sound was rather forced. "Oh," she said lightly, "he is a tremendous clubbiat! All young men go through the phase, don't you think?" She paused a moment and her voice sounded as though her breath was coming rather quickly as she said carelessly:

"You find him a good deal altered, I dare say? Six months"—she paused; her breath was troublesome—"six months makes such a difference at his time of life!" she finished.

Loring looked at her. He had long ago decided that when a woman was "made up" it was of very little use to direct observation to anything but her eyes.

"Yes!" he said reflectively, as though

debating a question already existing in his mind, and answering it for the first time.

"He is altered! I suppose—yes, I suppose six months must make a difference!"

A sharp breath as at a sudden stab of pain had parted Mrs. Romaine's lips at his first words, and he saw a hard, defiant brightness come into her eyes.

"I was very glad to see—well, may one allude to what one could not help seeing yesterday?" he went on in another and much lighter tone.

"One may allude to it confidentially!" returned Mrs. Romaine, and her gay tone was rather high-pitched and uneven. "Not otherwise, I am sorry to say—at present! Did Julian say anything about it?" Her tone as she asked the question was carelessness itself, but her fingers were tightly clenched round her handkerchief as she waited for the answer.

"A word or two!" returned Loring. "I inferred that it was only a question of time. Has it been going on long?"

"All the winter!" she answered, and again there was that little forced laugh. "You see, unfortunately, 'she' has been away! I had hoped that it would have come off before she went away, but it didn't!"

She stopped rather abruptly; and Loring, watching her keenly, said:

"You think it is time he should marry?"

"I think—well, yes, I suppose I do! Don't you agree with me? You young men are so apt to get into mischief, you know!"

"I suppose I can hardly deny the general principle," answered Loring with a slight smile, "though it is some time since I have been a young man in any practical sense! But as to Julian, I hardly know——"

"But you must know!" returned Mrs. Romaine quickly, and with an affected laugh. "And you must know, in the first place, that I'm relying on you for a good deal of co-operation—oh, of course, not in these delicate affairs!"

A certain shade of attention—just that attention which might become gravely or gaily sympathetic according to the demand made upon him—appeared in Loring's manner. He replied to her last words with a gesture of mock deprecation which answered the tone in which they were spoken; but a quiet, reliable interest touched his voice as he spoke which seemed to respond rather to the possibilities of the situation.

"You have only to command me!" he said.

There was a hungry intentness about Mrs. Romayne's mouth now, and about her clenched hand, which only a tremendous effort and the sacrifice of all reality of tone could have kept out of her voice.

"To tell you the truth," she said lightly, "there was rather a catastrophe in the autumn; a girl, you know, silly boy—the usual thing! I fancy it has upset him a good deal in every way, and there is nothing like marriage for settling a young man down after such an affair!"

She paused as though—while her confidence in her statement, and the point of view from which she had presented the matter stood in no need of confirmation—she yet hungered to hear it subscribed to by another voice. And Loring nodded with grave, attentive assent.

"Quite so!" he said sententially.

"Now, of course," she continued, "of course a woman can't know all the ins and outs of a young man's life, even when she's his mother. It's out of the question; and to be very frank with you"—there was something painful now about the lightness of her tone—"his mother had to be rather autocratic, and the boy didn't much like it. Consequently I can't feel sure that—well, that she knows even as much as she might about his affairs, now! That's why I'm confiding in you in this expansive way! I want you to look after him for me!"

Loring changed his position, and nodded again gravely and comprehendingly.

"I understand!" he said slowly. "I understand!" The statement was true in far wider sense than Mrs. Romayne could be aware of. There was a moment's silence, during which he seemed to deliberate deeply on the facts presented to him, watched intently by Mrs. Romayne; and then he roused himself, as it were. "I won't say that your confidence in me gives me great pleasure," he said, "because I hope you know that. I will simply say that I will do all I can!"

The words were admirably spoken, with a gentleness and consideration of tone and manner which were all the more striking from their contrast with his usual demeanour; and they carried an impression of strength and sympathy such as no woman could have resisted. A strange spasm as of intense relief passed across Mrs. Romayne's face, and for the moment she did not speak. Then she said low and hurriedly:

"I have heard that he gambles, and it—it worries me! A boy will often listen to a friend whom he respects, and—and—I rely on you."

"I consider myself honoured!"

A pause followed, and then Loring continued with an easy seriousness which was very reassuring:

"I am very glad to know all this, for it gives me a key, without which I might have blundered considerably! To return confidence for confidence, and to assure you that I really have some power to help you, I will say that I made a little discovery about Julian yesterday which perplexed me a good deal. I shall know now how to act. If he must speculate——"

He was interrupted. The daintily coloured face before him, set so resolutely into an expression of carelessness, changed suddenly and terribly; a ghastly reality that lay behind that artificiality seemed on the instant to crash through all veils and masks as Mrs. Romayne rose to her feet with a hoarse cry, her face drawn and working, her hands stretched out as though to ward off something unendurably horrible.

"No!" she gasped, and she was absolutely fighting and struggling for breath as though something clutched at her throat. "Not that! oh, good heavens, not that! You must stop it! You must prevent it. He must not! He must not! Do you hear me? He must not!"

There are some natures which not even contact with throbbing, vibrating reality can touch or thrill, and Loring, surprised, indeed, had risen also, cynical, imperturbable, and cool-headed as usual.

"By Jove!" he said to himself critically. "Who would have thought she had it in her!" The choked, agonised voice stopped abruptly, and he met her eyes, wild and fierce in their desperate command, and said quickly and soothingly:

"I will do anything you wish, I assure you! You have only to speak! I am grieved beyond all words to have distressed you so! I had no idea——"

A hoarse laugh broke from Mrs. Romayne and she turned away with a strange gesture almost as though it were herself she derided, and Loring was forgotten by her, clasping her hands fiercely over her face. Loring paused a moment and then went on smoothly:

"There is nothing to disturb you, I assure you, in what I was going to say. Most young men have a turn for dabbling



in speculation at some time or other, and though I know some ladies have a horror of it, I don't think you would find that there is much foundation for that horror." He stopped somewhat abruptly. He had suddenly remembered that he was speaking to the widow of William Romaine, of whose final collapse he knew the outline. He looked at the woman before him with her hidden face, her figure rigid and tense from head to foot, and thought to himself callously how curious these survivals of emotion were. She did not move or speak, and he went on with a tone of delicate sympathy:

"No doubt, if you really think it well to stop it with a high hand, it can be done! I ought to say that I have rather broken confidence in revealing Julian's doings, as he is very anxious that you should not think him dissatisfied or ungrateful, and did not wish you to hear of them." A shiver shook the bowed figure from head to foot. "I'm afraid I thought more of reassuring you than of him! I thought that if you knew that he and I were in the same affair, and that he would act solely on my advice, you would, perhaps, feel happier about him!"

But the answer he wanted, the answer which would have enabled him to continue his reassurances on the purely personal line, was not forthcoming. Mrs. Romaine neither spoke nor moved. He had no intention of risking his position by foolhardiness, so he adjusted his line of argument to the darkness in which her silence left him.

"As I said, however," he continued gently, "if you prefer to talk to him on the subject, and ask him to give it up, no doubt he will do so rather than distress you! And if you lay your commands on me to that effect, I will certainly refuse to go any further with him! But may I say that I think you would be wiser to let things take their course? It is not a good thing to thwart a young man in the frame of mind you have hinted at as being Julian's at present. If you can conquer your horror of the idea, I am sure you will be better satisfied in the end!"

There was a dead silence. At last Mrs. Romaine raised her head slowly, not turning her face towards Loring, but looking straight before her, as though utterly oblivious of his personal presence. There was a strange, fleeting dignity about her drawn face, with its wide, ghastly eyes; the dignity which comes from horror confronted.

"Take their course!" she said in a still, far-away voice. She paused a moment, and then went on in the same tone. "You think this is—inevitable?" The last word came with a strange ring.

"I think that any attempt at its prevention would be most undesirable," said Loring. "It might lead—of course, it is not very likely, but still it is possible—to private speculations on Master Julian's part!"

"Very well, then!" There was a curious, hard steadiness in her tone, as of one who perforce concedes a point to an adversary, and braces every nerve afresh to face the new situation thus created.

"That is like you!" exclaimed Loring admiringly. The tone of her voice had passed him by. "You will be glad, I know! Now, let me say again how awfully sorry I am to have distressed you, and then I'll go. You'll be glad to get rid of me!"

She did not seem to hear the words, but as his voice ceased, she turned her face slowly towards him with a vague, uncertain look upon it, as though her consciousness was struggling back to him, and the life he represented, across a great gulf. She looked at him a moment, and then that dignity, and a strange pathos which that groping look had possessed, gave way before a ghastly smile.

"I'm afraid I've been making myself most ridiculous!" she said, and there was a difficult, uncertain sprightliness about her weak voice. "So awfully sorry! I'm rather absurd about speculation. Old memories with which I needn't bore you! You'll look after my boy, then? Thanks!" She held out her hand as she spoke with a little affected gesture, but as he placed his hand in it her fingers closed with an icy clutch. "And now, do you know, I must send you away! Too bad, isn't it? But there is such a thing as dressing for dinner."

"Quite so," returned Loring gaily. "It is very good of you to have been bothered with me so long! Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" she answered. "You'll report progress, of course?"

"Certainly! We're a pair of conspirators, are we not?"

When Mrs. Romaine came down to dinner that night her face was as haggard as though the interval intervening had held for her another three days' illness. But the hard determination in her eyes was more intense than ever.



## CHAPTER XXIX.

It was not generally known among his acquaintances that Marston Loring had come back from Africa accompanied by a new friend; this new friend was not introduced by Loring at either of his clubs, and yet the two met at least once every day. He was a man named Alfred Ramsay; a small, insignificant-looking man, with sandy hair, which had turned—in streaks—the peculiar grey which such hair assumes, and small, dull eyes that never seemed to move in his head.

It was nearly three o'clock on the afternoon following that on which Loring had called on Mrs. Romayne, and he and his new friend were together in his chambers in the Temple. Mr. Ramsay had been there several times before, and he was sitting now in an arm-chair in the sunshine with an air of total want of interest in his surroundings, which was characteristic of him. Loring was walking up and down the room thoughtfully.

"Romayne!" observed Ramsay. "Not a particularly good name on the market! It belonged to a first-class swindler twenty years ago—William Romayne. This young gentleman is no connexion, I suppose?"

The remark broke a short silence, and Loring stopped in his walk and leant back against the mantelpiece as he answered.

"Yes," he said tersely, "he's his son. He has never been in his father's line though—I doubt whether he knows anything about him, though it's an odd thing that he shouldn't. As to the name, why, it's an old story, and won't affect any one nowadays, I take it. The point is that he has this respectable capital, and is—exceedingly keen on increasing it."

There was a dryness in Loring's voice as he said the last words, which implied a great deal more than did his words. And it was apparently to that significance that the other man replied.

"A chip of the old block," said Ramsay musingly. "I wonder, now, how far it goes?"

The last words were spoken very slowly, and the dull eyes looked straight before them.

Loring looked down at him with a cynical smile just touching his lips. He knew considerably more about his new friend's character than he would have chosen to put into words, and he could guess, not inaccurately, what was passing

in his mind at the moment. And the realisation of the shadowy possibilities with which Ramsay was occupied was no part of Marston Loring's designs. He made no direct answer.

"He should be here by this time," he said carelessly.

And as he spoke there was a sharp, cheery rap at the door; it opened quickly, and Julian Romayne appeared, very boyish, very good-looking, and with a curious veiled keenness in his eyes.

"We were just expecting you," said Loring, greeting him with a friendly nod. "Let me introduce you to Mr. Alfred Ramsay."

Mr. Alfred Ramsay had risen to honour the introduction, turning his whole head slowly round as he looked at Julian, so that his eyes still gazed straight before them as they rested on the young man's face.

"Pleased to know you," he said indifferently.

"Very glad to make your acquaintance," responded Julian pleasantly. "I hope I'm not behind time?"

"Pretty fair," said Loring, laying his hand on the young man's shoulder with kindly patronage. "But Ramsay is a busy man, you know, so suppose we get to business at once. Ramsay," he continued, in a brisk, business-like voice, as the three sat down about the table, "Romayne knows nothing of the affair whatever. I shall begin by running over the preliminaries with him. And, first of all," he went on, turning to Julian, "of course it is understood, Romayne, that we keep the matter to ourselves."

He spoke in a curt, off-hand manner, and as Julian made a quick gesture of acquiescence, he went on in the same business-like tone.

"I don't know whether you know anything about the Welcome Diamond Mining Company?" he said. "Probably not. It was floated about this time last year, and the greater part of the business came into my hands. The shares were taken up all right, but—well, it didn't come to anything, and its affairs had something to do with my going out to the Cape. It was in connection with those same affairs that I and Ramsay met."

Julian had listened so far with a clouded countenance, and now, as Loring paused, he leant back in his chair with a movement of irrepressible disappointment.

"Oh!" he said shortly. "It's a mine, then?" "There is a mine in connection with it," replied Loring imperturbably. "But you need not trouble yourself about the mine. That is only the figure-head, you understand. The affair itself is a matter of—arrangement. Look here, Romaine," he went on, as Julian leant suddenly forward across the table, "shares in the Welcome Diamond Mining Company are at this moment worth about five shillings each."

He paused. He had been leaning carelessly back in his chair, and now he moved, uncrossing his legs, and leaning one arm on the table.

"In a few days," he went on deliberately and significantly, "they will fall to two shillings." He paused again, with a slight, matter-of-course gesture. "That will be worked, of course," he said.

Julian nodded comprehension.

"Yes?" he said.

"At that price," continued Loring, "all the shares will be bought up by two or three men, in consequence of private information received from the Cape."

The last words came from Loring slowly and deliberately, and his eyes met Julian's significantly. A quick flash of understanding passed across Julian's face, and Loring continued easily:

"Reports to this effect will get about. The fact of the presence in London of a mining engineer from the vicinity of the Welcome will also get about. Perhaps he may allow himself to be interviewed, you know—nothing definite, of course. The shares will go up with a run."

He paused, and Julian threw himself back in his chair, tapping the table meditatively with one hand. His gaze was fixed upon the wall just over Loring's head, and there was a curious expression on his face which combined the keen matter-of-fact calculation of the habitual speculator with a certain unconscious gleam of hungry excitement which was eloquent of youth and inexperience. A minute or two passed, during which Mr. Ramsay's eyes rested indifferently on the young man's face, and then Julian spoke. His voice, also, in spite of his evident attempt at emulation of Loring's business-like nonchalance, was just touched by that youthful incapacity for holding keen personal interest in abeyance.

"And the private information received from the Cape will be supplied——?" he said interrogatively.

"Will be supplied by Ramsay," returned Loring.

The words were spoken with the slightest possible movement of the eyelids. Julian made a quick gesture of comprehension, and there was a moment's silence. Then Loring went on crisply, darting a quick glance at Julian's face in its calculating eagerness.

"In a private speculation of this kind, of course, it is a case of working together and share and share alike. Now, we propose—Ramsay and I, you understand—to make up a joint capital for the purchase of these shares. We are prepared to put into it fifteen thousand pounds between us, and we want another ten thousand at least. If you are prepared to put in that sum, or more, on the understanding that the profits—after each man has received back his original investment—are divided into three equal shares, we are willing to take you in with us."

Julian looked up at him quickly.

"Into three equal shares?" he said with a stress on the adjective.

"Into three equal shares," returned Loring drily. "Capital is not the sole requisite in this affair, and the other factors are supplied by Ramsay and myself."

A dark flush mounted to Julian's forehead, and the avidity in his eyes developed.

"It's a large order, though," he said. "I don't quite see where I come in at that rate, after all."

Loring leant back in his chair and looked him full in the face.

"You can please yourself, of course," he said. "Take it or leave it. You will come in to the tune of something like thirty thousand. If you see your way to trebling your capital by any other means do so. Lots of fellows will be glad to take your place with us."

Julian's eyes gleamed greedily, and he wavered obviously.

"Those are your final terms?" he said.

"Our final terms," said Loring concisely, looking at Ramsay, who nodded nonchalantly in confirmation of the words.

A silence ensued. Julian sat staring down at the table, his brows knit, evidently in close thought. At last he glanced up suddenly at the two men who had been waiting carelessly for his decision.

"I call it rather rough," he said brusquely; "but—all right. If the thing looks all right when you've trotted it out, I accept."

He passed on instantly with a brief

telling question to the inner working of the scheme.

There is perhaps nothing by which self-revelation is more frankly and unconsciously made than in the means by which a man may be most easily roused to enthusiasm. Enthusiasm—a genuine, feverish quickening of his mental pulses, even—had been a condition of things practically unknown to the easy-going, commonplace Julian Romaine of a year before; but in the course of the last two months he had experienced it often. To hear of large sums of money, large profits, rapid returns on striking investments, touched him, instinctively, as a record of artistic achievements will touch an artist, as triumph of research will touch a historian, as prodigies of physical prowess will touch an athlete. And as Loring answered him now, and went on with fuller and more technical detail, his face changed strikingly. His eyes brightened, and an eager, fascinated light came into them; he leant further forward, listening, commenting, questioning, with quick and always increasing excitement.

Half an hour passed, and still the three men sat about the table, talking in terse, business-like fashion; three-quarters of an hour; an hour. At the end of that time Julian, his face flushed and eager, his eyes glistening and sparkling, his hand absolutely shaking with excitement, was holding that hand out to Mr. Ramsay with a gesture which witnessed to the work of that hour, as volumes could not have done. As far as words went, he and Mr. Ramsay had hardly exchanged three sentences; it was the bond that lay behind the words that had drawn them together. Mr. Ramsay had spoken very little, indeed, but his silent presence had never for a moment seemed superfluous, or without a certain indefinite weight, and there was a dull approval in his slow eyes now as he turned them on the young man.

"We've settled so much, then," said Julian, in a quick, familiar way, "and we meet here on Thursday at two. Until then——" He turned to Loring, and stretched out his hand eagerly. "Thanks, old man," he said in a low, quick voice. "Thanks."

#### SOME FAMOUS ART SALES.

ALL great private collections of art and bric-à-brac sooner or later come to the

hammer. A living generation has seen dispersed the riches of Stowe, the treasures of Blenheim, the historic relics of Hamilton Palace. It is only public collections that have a chance of surviving the vicissitudes of life, that have no prodigal heirs to fear, or others too prudent who prefer a safer investment and so much per cent. to the barren honour of being custodian of historic treasures.

And turning to the sales of a former period, they rise before us, a long line of ancestors, whose beginnings are lost in the haze of antiquity. Athenian virtuosi probably exhibited with pride bibelots they had purchased at the Alcibiades sale, and Roman exquisites might boast of so many thousand sesterces paid for a famous Grecian vase. And although barbarian invaders had a short and summary way of disposing of art collections, yet doubtless they had their rude auctions of acquired plunder, while dealers hovered round the hosts, and picked up bargains in the midst of rapine and destruction. In mediæval times there was too much jostling and fighting to give people time to look after curios and bric-à-brac, and churches, monasteries, and favourite shrines were the only safe places of deposit for such perishable things. In our own country, the Reformation afforded a fine field for the dealer and collector, and although much precious work perished in the melting-pot, the spoils of the monasteries formed the nucleus of many a fine collection. King Harry himself had a fine taste in art. He duly appreciated Holbein—"he could make as many noblemen as he pleased, but not one Holbein"—and his taste in architecture, in furniture, in hangings, in jewellery and plate, seems to have been of the highest quality. This taste was not inherited by his children, and the Elizabethan age, the brightest period in literature, is one of decadence in art. But Charles the First was a connoisseur of exquisite taste, and the great artists of the day were his friends and advisers. The distracted state of Italy favoured the King's design of forming a truly regal collection of paintings, to adorn the magnificent palace he proposed to build at Whitehall, and his agents secured the rich galleries of the ducal family of Gonzaga, with other art treasures the loss of which English cognoscenti still deplore. For after the King's execution, the whole collection was sold piecemeal, chiefly to the agents of foreign Courts. The Spanish Ambassador

purchased what it required eighteen mules to carry from the port of landing to Madrid. The galleries of Vienna were enriched with the spoils of the English monarch. In France, Mazarin gloated over the bargains he had secured from the Parltan commissioners of the sale. Yet the collection realised one hundred and eighteen thousand pounds, a large sum for those days, and one which shows that Cromwell and his agents were alive to the value of what they were selling.

From this time sales became frequent of pictures, antiquities, and curios in general. Collections of doubtful old masters were offered on the part of dubious Italian princes. Men like Evelyn, who had visited foreign galleries and assumed a knowledge of art and virtu; officials, like Mr. Samuel Pepys, who were picking up gold and silver in the national Tom Tiddler's ground; old Cavaliers, such as Sir Kenelm Digby and Prince Rupert, set the fashion of a gentle mania for collecting objects of art.

The chief marts of the period were in Covent Garden, and here the trade remained till well into the following century. Here in 1733, Mr. Cock, in the great Piazza, sold the interesting collections made in the previous century by Sir Robert Cotton. The MSS. were not included, as Sir Robert's descendants had presented them to the nation, and these, with Sir Hans Sloane's collection and the Harley MSS., went to form the corpus of our national museum, as first established at Montagu House. But the rest of Lord Harley's antiques and curios were sold by auction, by Mr. Cock, in the Piazza, where Horace Walpole was among the buyers, bidding cautiously, and not reckless of his guineas, but gradually building up the collection that was to make Strawberry Hill so famous.

Under the same Piazza Langford flourished his hammer over the choice collection of Dr. Mead, when that great physician and excellent man paid the debt of nature in 1754. Hogarth had his own auction at his house in Leicester Square, whither he invited the world to come and bid for his "Marriage à la Mode." But only one purchaser made his appearance, to whom the pictures were knocked down at his own price, one hundred and twenty guineas. This fiasco naturally increased Hogarth's fury against the dealers of the day, and the "black masters" whose pictures attracted the crowd, whether to the Piazza, or to Ford's

in the Haymarket, or to Patterson's at Essex House. Presently Christie came upon the scene, one of whose early sales was the collection of a Pope, Paul the Fourth, brought from Rome to Pall Mall in 1770. Again in 1773, we find Christie offering "Statues, bustos, bas-reliefs, etc.," purchased by the brothers Adam in Italy. From the conjunction of names, we may make a guess as to Mr. Christie's country of origin. For we may remember David Garrick's saying, "that his friends, the Adams, were the most liberal-minded men he knew, yet somehow they employed nobody but Scotchmen." David himself was a frequenter of Christie's sale-rooms in Pall Mall, and Gainsborough from his rooms at Schomburg House on the other side of the way, and Dr. Johnson and his satellite James Boswell.

Gainsborough died in 1788, and his collection was sold by his friend Christie in 1792. In the latter year died Reynolds, and for his pictures and curios the same auctioneer performed the last offices. Again, when Lord Bute's collection came to the hammer in 1796, a few years after the once famous statesman's death, it was like bringing a former generation into evidence, and the riots and frolics of the days of Wilkes and Liberty. In the same year appears a catalogue of the small gallery of Field-Marshal Wade, of "blessed" memory in connection with Highland roads, a memory that went back to the 'forty-five, and the invasion of the clans.

But the auction-rooms also reflected the lurid glow of the French Revolution. Far-seeing French nobles had transferred their choicest treasures to England when the movement first began. M. de Calonne, who had essayed to restore the finances of the falling monarchy before M. Neckar undertook the hopeless task, had prudently transferred his gallery of pictures to London, and they were offered for sale by Skinner and Dyke, at the great rooms in Spring Gardens, in 1795. The history of the Orleans collection, which was brought to England in the early days of the Revolution, would form a romance to itself. Acquired by the Regent Orleans, who was at more pains to enrich his collection than to secure the interests of France, and whose agents were backed by diplomatic pressure and the resources of the monarchy, the Regent's galleries in the Palais Royal were perhaps the finest in Europe. But they narrowly escaped ruin at the hands of his son, a weak and prudish person, who



gave orders that all pictures of the nude should be destroyed. The next Duke was more engrossed in politics than in art, and he required money above all things, hoping to direct the revolutionary storm to his own advantage. A M. de Mereville bought all his pictures of the Italian school, and they were safely transferred to England, whither their new owner followed them and thus saved his head from the guillotine, a fate that overtook his father, a rich banker, who it is to be presumed found the money for the purchase. But the Flemish and Dutch collection still remained, and a small syndicate of English noblemen determined to secure it. The agent for the purchase, Mr. Thomas Moore Slade, was himself a remarkable figure in the art sale history of the period. Originally a man of fortune, he settled as a young man at Venice, in 1774, acquired the Vitturi collection and other fine pictures, and when the American revolutionary war began, and the French joined in, he determined to transfer his treasures to England; taking the precaution to address all the cases to the Italian Ambassador, M. Cavalli. The ship that carried them was taken by a French privateer, but M. Cavalli claimed the cargo, and eventually secured its restitution, and the captors lost a noble prize, which, had the truth been known, was justly theirs according to the laws of prize. But Slade, while he increased his fortune by investments in art, lost it all by trade speculation. He joined an enterprise for "making cloth without spinning or weaving"—shoddy, in fact, but before its time. Anyhow, it ruined Mr. Slade, who was thus found a proper agent for a somewhat risky enterprise. Well supplied with funds, Slade arrived in Paris on the very day on which the unhappy French King had made his escape from his keepers, and in all the tumult of the recapture and bringing back of the Royal Family, Slade was busy negotiating at the Palais Royal. Finally the bargain was struck. But the news of the sale had oozed out, and the gallery was surrounded by an excited crowd, who were disposed to resist the removal of the pictures by force. It needed little to set the people to tearing Mr. Slade to pieces or hanging him to the nearest lamp. But some new excitement called away the crowd, and Slade, who had everything ready, smuggled the pictures on board a barge on the Seine, which quietly dropped down the river to Havre, while a committee of patriotic art-lovers had arranged to arrest

the collection on its presumed route to Calais.

"Now we have almost repaired the loss of our Charles the First collection!" exclaimed English virtuosi, when they heard of the safe arrival of the Orleans collection. Which reminds one of the Scotch doctor in England, who, summing up the casualties among his patients, remarked: "We've not made up for Flodden yet!"

The sale of the Orleans collection by private contract, after some months' exhibition in the London sale-rooms, was the great event of the end of the century. But now, owing to the success of the French arms, treasures poured in upon England in a continuous stream. The great Italian families were selling their choicest pictures in alarm, and astute English agents bought them up. It was the same in Spain, and under the very noses of Napoleon and his Marshals, the choicest pictures were secured and packed off. Many were the unrecorded adventures of the great masterpieces that now adorn our public and private galleries. Often, to avoid detention at the ports, the cases were shipped under feigned names and with false descriptions. The Altieri Claudes, smuggled out of Italy, lay so long at the English Custom House unclaimed that they were sold at last to pay charges, and fetched one thousand two hundred pounds. But the syndicate which had bought them in Italy contrived to get them back, and sold them to Beckford at Fonthill for ten thousand guineas. Our Consuls and diplomatic agents abroad were often engaged in this art trade. Udney, at Leghorn, realised a handsome fortune in old masters. Our Ambassador at Naples, Sir William Hamilton, secured a vast collection of objects of art; part of which were acquired by the British Museum, while another part went to the bottom of the sea in the wreck of the "Colossus," off the Scilly Isles, and a third was sold by public auction.

Enriched by all these acquisitions, which raised England from being one of the poorest countries in works of the great masters, to perhaps the richest in private collections of the same, yet sales went on merrily from the very opening of the present century, so that hardly a year passes without some fine collection being brought to the hammer. It is curious to read of the sale, in 1808, of Mr. Speaker Lenthall's pictures, who died 1662; but the collection had been carefully preserved at the family



seat at Burford, till its time came to share the general fate. The great sale of the first quarter of the century was that at Fonthill, of the treasures of "Vathek" Beckford, the son of the patriotic Lord Mayor, whose monument is conspicuous in the City Guildhall, and the builder of a magnificent palace, which soon after tumbled to pieces of its own weight. The world of rank and fashion spread itself over those Wiltshire plains, great dames and noble lords picnicked in humble cottages, and the sale-room—admission by catalogue; price, twelve shillings and sixpence—was a forest of waving plumes, for all ladies of fashion wore ostrich feathers in those days. Yet there were good virtuosi among the titled crowd, for the Court of George the Fourth, if not distinguished for virtue, was a good school of virtue. The King himself had a fine taste in art and bric-à-brac, and enriched the Royal collections with the best part of their most valuable items. And it must not be forgotten that he urged the purchase for the nation of the Angerstein collection in 1824, which was virtually the foundation of the National Gallery.

The next historic occasion is the sale of the Strawberry Hill collection in 1842, at the instance of Lord Waldegrave, who had inherited Horace Walpole's art treasures. But the public taste had changed. Tom Towers, from his editorial chair, sneered at the whole affair, while the florid eloquence of Mr. Robins, the auctioneer, aided in giving a tinge of ridicule to the dispersal of this really grand collection. There was, in fact, a bear market in curios, and dealers profited as usual. That magnificent enamel known as the hunting-horn of Francis the First was sold for one hundred and fourteen pounds five shillings. At Christie's last year it was knocked down after a brisk competition at six thousand three hundred guineas. And by those "in the know," as the saying is, bargains almost as good were made at the Strawberry Hill sale.

The Stowe sale in 1848 may metaphorically "take the cake" as the biggest sale, hitherto, in the century. Stowe is a wonderful place in itself, the work of "brave Cobham," the friend of Pope, who, instead of sneering, as at "Timon's villa," commemorates the design in terms that are perhaps meant to be sincere:

Calls in the country, catches opening glades,  
Unites the woods, and varies shades from shades;  
Nature shall join you; time shall make it grow,  
A work to wonder at—perhaps a Stowe.

The wonder of the present century was to see the crowd pouring into these aristocratic shades, whistling and singing under the Corinthian arch, galloping shouting up the mile long avenue, and dashing over the Palladian Bridge, tax carts, chariots, fours-in-hand, donkey-barrows, like the crowd on the way to Epsom Downs on a Derby day. The sale lasted forty days, which is perhaps a record, but it was not all art, for it included all the appurtenances of an immense establishment.

The Bernal collection, sold in the same year, was really richer in the objects of art than the collector values most. Ralph Bernal was an illustrious collector, and, initiated in all the mysteries of the craft, an industrious hunter in brokers' shops, in dealers' collections, in art sale-rooms, and with an unfailing instinct for a good thing. And the true collector dates rather from the Bernal sale than the more showy one of Stowe, in the same year.

But the epoch-making sale was that of the Gillott collection in 1872—Gillott with two "l's" and two "t's"; "all others are fraudulent counterfeits," as one used to read on the steel-pen boxes of other days. A good homely creature was the leviathan steel-pen maker, who captivated the great Turner in the crankiest of his moods, and tamed him by the music of crisp thousand-pound notes. "What will you take for the lot?" was traditionally the penman's question, as he glanced in real awe round the great artist's studio, where paintings were stacked as if in a broker's shop. "Thirty thousand pounds," growled the artist, who might have been the broker's man as far as appearances went. Gillott sat down to count out the notes without another word. But Turner stopped him; it was no deal, said the artist, yet the man with the notes might have a few. And the penmaker carried off some of the best pictures in triumph. And now these priceless Turners were exhibited at Christie's, where all the world flocked to see them, with other fine pictures of the modern school. It was just then a high tide of commercial prosperity, and Pætolus seemed to have been turned into the British Isles, and everybody, with the exception of an unimportant thirty million or so, had plenty of money, and, instructed by the high prices that ruled at the Gillott sale, made haste to invest it in pictures.

The sale of the Barker collection of pictures in 1874 showed that the old

masters did not share in the modern boom, and the sale of the fine collection of modern pictures made by Sam Mendel, of Manchester, was again noted for high prices. But in this way the summit was reached in the Quilter sale of water-colours, when some fine drawings of David Cox realised extraordinary prices. The "Hayfield," sold originally by David for fifty guineas, realised two thousand nine hundred and fifty pounds. In the same year, 1875, began the dispersion of the Blenheim treasures by the sale of the Marlborough gems. In the following year the top price was reached for a picture by an English master at the sale of the Wynn Ellis collection, when Gainsborough's famous portrait of the lovely Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire was sold for ten thousand one hundred guineas. A few days after the picture was cut from its canvas, and stolen from Messrs. Agnew's rooms in Bond Street, and nothing, as far as the public knows, has been heard of it since. The same sale was also notable for a curious dispute about a picture by Turner of the Temple of Jupiter, which was denounced as spurious, and some went so far as to say that Mr. Ellis had had the picture copied, the copy being now on sale, and sold the original to the Duke of Northumberland. The Duke undoubtedly had a fine picture of Turner's on the same subject, but there were differences, and it was clearly proved that the picture was a genuine one. But the doubts raised cast a kind of frost over the latter part of the sale.

Subsequent sales showed a decline more or less marked from the high-water mark previously reached. Finance magnates were selling instead of buying, and Albert Grant's gallery of modern paintings, intended for his palace at Kensington, but never hung—the palace itself, like Aladdin's, has vanished—was sold considerably under its cost. The great event of these latter years was the clearance of Hamilton Palace, when the treasured heirlooms of centuries were brought bodily up to the King Street rooms. Historic relics abounded, and former Dukes had also acquired a fine gallery of old masters. There was wonderful science, too, jewels, lace—all the most precious things in the world were there, and the whole realised the respectable total of three hundred and ninety-seven thousand pounds.

Since that date some fine collections have come before the public. The Aston Rowant

gallery came to the hammer in 1883, when good but not extravagant prices ruled for modern pictures; the Fontaine collection, rich in majolica, was sold in the following year; and in 1885 occurred that magnificent sale—by private contract—of the Blenheim Raphael to the National Gallery for seventy thousand pounds. The rest of the Blenheim pictures found their way to Christie's in the following year. At the sale of the Graham collection in the same year, 1886, Gainsborough's "Sisters" sold for within a "pony" of ten thousand pounds, while at the sale of the rest of the Graham gallery in 1887, the Rothschilds acquired Boucher's "Madame de Pompadour" for ten thousand three hundred and ninety-five pounds. At the Knowles sale in the same year, Millais's "Over the Hills and Far Away" sold for five thousand two hundred and fifty pounds. There was a distinct drop in Coxes, and the "Hayfield" went for one thousand eight hundred and ninety-five pounds at the Fulbeck Hall sale, and in the following year the "Vale of Clwyd" had dropped to two thousand four hundred and fifteen pounds. But in 1891 Turner's "Walton Bridge" realised seven thousand four hundred and fifty-five pounds at the Bolckow sale, as against five thousand pounds at the dispersal of the Gillott collection.

And now if you would witness the dispersal of some famous art collection, to nowhere else than Christie's can you wend your way. The long line of carriages extending up and down form a measure of the fashionable nature of the function. The rooms are thronged, but not crowded. Smart people come and go, how d'y'e do, shake hands, take off hats, recognise friends, stare, smile, simper, chatter about everything and nothing. Ladies arrange themselves in the carved oaken chairs—not without an eye to effect. The rustle of dresses, the faint fragrance of perfume, fill the air. But this is only the gilded frame of the picture. The business part of the show consists of an open quadrangle of tables covered with green baize, with the auctioneer's pulpit at the open end. This is the dealers' row, and is occupied by a solid phalanx of the order—stout men for the most part, with plenty of broadcloth expended on their garments, comfortable, easy-looking men, who exchange badinage in German and French, as well as in the vernacular of Stratford-atté-Bowe. Among the foreigners, per-

haps, is some dark-eyed boy—like Sâtel, in "Le Blocus," "la tête crépue et les yeux vifs comme un véritable écoureuil"—who is writing for his round, alert-looking papa. That is the way to acquire a true knowledge of affairs—to begin early; the barren arts of mathematics or logic are nothing to the art of the dexterous dealer. But there are others who, catalogues in hand, are following the progress of the sale—smart young women; faultlessly-attired young men; old ladies, too, keen of beak and eagle-eyed; and faded-looking old gentlemen, who are yet capable of being warmed into life by a rare enamel of Limoges or a majolica dish.

When the sale opens, with all this crowd of witnesses holding the affair in full survey, and with the appearance in the rostrum of the president of the assembly, it is perhaps in the nature of an anticlimax when a little pot, about the size of an ordinary pepper-caster, is brought round by the porter—the man in the cap and apron—who must be an authority, too, upon bric-à-brac, so many pieces has he handled. He travels with it round the dealers' ring—we may call it a ring, though it is square, as is the prize-ring, for that matter—some little bit of Bow, or Chelsea, or Fulham, dear to the British collector, but caviare to him of Frankfort or of Paris. Then perhaps majolica comes in, and heavy Dutchmen stir and vivacious Frenchmen, at least a size broader than the Dutch, and the boy with the black eyes watches things calmly, but intently, and biddings mount up to hundreds of guineas.

But in course of time we come to the great piece of the day, something that nations thirst after and great collectors are wild to attain. The dealers rise from their chairs, and everybody cranes forward as the Henri Deux jug or François Premier enamel is borne carefully and tenderly round in its cradle lined with cotton wool. But everybody knows all about it, and veteran dealers salute it with their pencils, and whisper reminiscences of the previous sale long years ago, whether in London, Paris, Rome, or Vienna, where they first made its acquaintance. When the hum of expectation and interest has subsided, the president briefly addresses the assembly. He is not eloquent, his manner is calm and judicial, not persuasive. He has only to remark that here is a remarkable piece of work that would give distinction to any collection apart from its intrinsic value. And now what price Henri or François?

Sprung at a thousand the ball rolls gaily on—it is something of a distinction to have made a bid for this remarkable piece—and so in full cry all round the biddings run on by hundreds without a check, without a break. By degrees the pack tail off, but it is still ding-dong among two or three leaders; at last only one, like Fitzjames's hound.

And now the hammer comes down as swiftly and decisively as if the affair were of a guinea or two instead of some thousands of these obsolete but still popular coins. Crack! for Henri Deux, captured by the Germans like his papa François. Why, this is worse than Pavia! Some one tries to raise a round of applause; but it dies away. Why cheer when our favourite pots are captured by the stern invader?

When pictures are selling, the scene is rather different; we have rows of seats disposed before the rostrum as in a lecture-room, while the pictures are stacked against the walls in arcades of green-baize. The light shines from above on the golden frames of the pictures, on the auctioneer and his assistants, on the assemblage of hats of every shape and form, with here or there some stray feminine headgear. The faces about are mostly bearded and well lined with wrinkles; the whole assemblage is a serious one, yet not without enthusiasm on the part of the non-buyers. Often some well-known picture elicits cheers, further approbation at the first thousand, more encouragement at the second, and quite an ovation as the hammer falls. The great dealers are all there, you may be sure; the representatives of the national collections, home and foreign, a Duke or two, perhaps, and a few enthusiasts in the way of millionaires, although such people generally buy through accredited dealers.

And in this fashion our great private collections melt away, and those that succeed them are still more fleeting and temporary. But public galleries grow and continue to grow. And there is one un-failing means that may be recommended to our great historic houses by which they may preserve their collections from falling under the auctioneer's hammer. Let them give their treasures to the nation, or to some one of the great cities in our midst. Artists can make such sacrifices—witness the Turner Gallery, and in our own days Sir John Gilbert's generous gifts—and in that way our great nobles and men of wealth may raise for themselves monuments more enduring than brass.

## PAUDHEEN RHU.

## AN IRISH SKETCH.

PADDY MEEHAN was a local institution. The town of Carrigmagrone, with its twelve hundred and three inhabitants, regarded Paddy Meehan—or, as he was called by all the country, Paudheen Rhu, or Red Paddy, as much because of his rubicund countenance as for the redness of his hair—as its special property. Nothing loth, Paddy returned the compliment, and professed that Carrigmagrone and all its people revolved on the axis of his individuality. In fact, he had come to think that, if through the force of any circumstances he were to be separated from Carrigmagrone or its people, it and they would, in his own phrase, “go to rack and ruin.”

Paddy was the town-crier, and loved to hear his treble ring along the four streets of the town—in which he was not born. Thereby hung a mystery, for nobody knew whence Paddy came. He had grave misgivings on the subject himself. He had assimilated himself to the people of Carrigmagrone and their condition so completely, and absorbed their notions so fully, that the place of his birth was altogether eliminated from his memory. All that the Carrigmagrone folk knew of Paddy was that he came; at what particular time or whence none could quite say. He put himself very much in evidence, and the people submitted quietly. Besides being town-crier he was also the local fire brigade. When a chimney was on fire, Paddy was on the spot with a wet sack to stop the draught up the flue, and let the soot smoulder out. When a fire assumed more alarming proportions, Paddy would be seen on the roof of the burning premises, or on some other vantage point, hauling up buckets of water—the hose and steam-engine were unknown in Carrigmagrone—and emptying their contents on the flames. On one occasion the fire proved too much for Paddy. It was the house of a gombeen man, or petty usurer, which “succumbed to the devouring element.”

“Mihul Mather’s burnin’ proved too much for you, entirely,” remarked a sympathetic policeman to Paddy the next day.

“See here, sargint, jewel,” replied Paddy, all-confident in his powers of extinguishing any mundane conflagration, “I don’t mind tellin’ you; I’m not afeard of douging any nath’ral fire; but when you have th’ould boy pokin’ up the blazes, as

I seen him in Mihuleen Mather’s house, what can a poor morthial like me do? It would take the whole rigiment of constabulary to put him an’ the fire out at wanst.”

But Paddy’s versatility was not limited by the avocations indicated. He was also the bill-poster of the district. In addition he was water-carrier of the town, supplying his customers with fresh spring water—conveyed in a huge barrel on a donkey-cart from a well a mile outside—every morning at so much a gallon. Further, he held an undisturbed monopoly of the window-cleaning of Carrigmagrone, and was employed by all the country round for the conveyance of special or particular messages. At fairs and markets he was ready for any odd job that might turn up, and on such occasions might be seen leading a horse on a trot for the inspection of an intending purchaser with as much unction and capering as if he were the vendor; or branding a cow with as much decision and impressiveness as if he had purchased the animal.

Paddy lived, or rather slept, in a loft which stood over a coach-house in a lane-way abutting the principal street, or “Market Square,” as it figured in civic nomenclature. He reached his nocturnal abode by means of iron pegs driven into the wall, and no one was known to have ever seen the inside of Paddy’s “mansion in the skies.” Strange to relate, he also was never known to have fallen while ascending his improvised staircase. In the absence of reception-rooms, he greeted his friends in the streets, and entertained them in the local tap-rooms. It was never difficult to find Paddy.

Paddy’s age was indefinable. He seemed to be any age from thirty to fifty—according to the light in which he was viewed. He was a low-sized, wiry man, and always looked clean. He wore a low, flat-crowned hat, which once might have been black, but no one could remember when it was other than a blue-green; a huge white and blue muffler arranged in a cravat hid the presence or concealed the absence of a shirt; he sported a faded brown velvet shooting-jacket; tweed knee-breeches and a pair of coachmen’s boots with the tops off, and well worn, completed his costume. As to external ornaments they were comprised in a huge hunting-watch attached to a leather string which held a dog-whistle at the other end. “Paddy’s thether,” as it was denominated, extended across his chest



from outer pocket to outer pocket. In his hand he usually carried a well-seasoned ash-plant, as old, the local folk said, as Paddy himself, and as inseparable from him as his right hand.

One bleak November evening Paddy, as usual, was on the look-out near the hotel for the "mail car" from Ballynina, the nearest railway town, which was due at half-past five. The rain came down in a slow, thick drizzle. Nothing but the dull hiss of its fall disturbed the silence of the streets, which could only be perceived by the dim, smoky flare of the oil-lamps that hung at intervals along the houses.

"Well, an' it's a grand night for those that like it," remarked Paddy to the ostler standing in the entrance to the hotel yard awaiting the arrival of the "mail car," "but by my sowkins I'd want to be a potheen 'stiller hidin' from the gaugers to have any regards for such weather at this time of the evenin'. Look at it now, man. It's dhroppin' down in floods of tears, as if 'twor sorry it didn't do so afore."

"You don't seem to mind it very much, Paddy," interjected the ostler.

"In throth it makes little difference to me, Thady. If the sun shines I'm happy, an' if it doesn't I'm not displeased. Shure there's no use in grumblin', as my mother said whin she hit the ould sow a wallop for eatin' her Sunday cloak. More be token that pig never recovered——"

"The blow, Paddy?"

"No, in throth, but the cloak; for she et the neck chain of it, and it gave her the maisles and they took her off before her time, poor thing, just like Tommy Malone's bull."

"What happened him, Paddy?" asked the ostler.

"Well, you see," responded Paddy, rubbing his chin, "'twas just this way. That same bull was a terror. Wan couldn't go with in an acre of him. He wor a young bull and a good wan too. But wan day, howsomever, ould Miss Julia Bannon, the ladies' school tayer, wor walkin' thro' the fields an', widout knowin' where she was goin', got into his paddock. Whin the bull sees her he makes a rush, and she has only time to dart back through the open sheep stile through which she cum. The bull couldn't turn as quick as Miss Julia, nor shtop himself so aisy, and like a bout of lightnin' he makes for the gap alantwise an' got shtuck in it. It isn't well known whether 'twor the sight of Miss Julia levantin' across the field for

her life or not that killed him, but he wor found shtone-dead wid a crik in his neck, an' it broken. But whisht! here's the mail coach, an' only wan passenger on it."

"Aisy, sir, aisly!" exclaimed Paddy to the "wan" passenger who was dismounting from the long car which Paddy described as the "mail coach," and as the former was about stepping down into a pool of water on the road: "Aisy, sir, or you're into a lough, or maybe the heavy rain has knocked the bottom out of it, and you'd find yourself goin' down to Australya quicker than you'd come up. Here you are, sir! Jump off here on teray formay, as the town clerk says," and Paddy directed the passenger's attention to the paved sidewalk.

"That same man's a foriner," said Paddy to the driver, as the passenger passed into the hotel, having jumped off the car without going down to "Australya."

"Musha, I dunno," replied the driver. "The sorra word he spoke since we left Ballynina."

"Shure, I'll sware he is," said Paddy. "Them foriners always wears a big cothamore, wid the collar turned up to their nose, and a big soft hat wid the rim down to their chin, as if the wind would give them appleplexix. An' shure they don't spake in anythin' but outlandish French or Rooshin. Sorra bit of me 'ud like to go a hen's race in the dark wid wan o' them folk. They're all conspayrithurs, they are."

"I say, Paddy, d'ye want a job?" broke out the waiter from the hotel door. "This gentleman wants to be dhriiven over to Mount Ellen, an' Tommy Tobin the dhriver is bad with rheumatics, and can't go out to-night."

"To the Hermit's!" ejaculated Paddy. "Not for all the money in the bank would I go out there to-night. Shure, there's nothin' but avil sperets there; an' on sich a night as this they'd come on ye altogether unawares in the dark avenue. Not for all the money——"

"He says he'll give ye ten shillins," interrupted the waiter again. "He wants to go there bad."

"An' I don't want to go there, good or bad——"

"Fifteen shillins he says, Paddy. Don't be a fool, man! 'Tisn't often ye get fifteen shillins for five miles of a drive."

"Well, he's a very persavarin' man, an' I suppose if I must, I must, if there's no



one else to do it. An' if he did it himself, the horse wouldn't understand his lingo an' 'ud run away. It's money down, isn't it?" whispered Paddy enquiringly to the waiter. "I don't like foriners, an' I'd as lave be paid aforehand by thim."

Paddy and his doubted fare were soon on their way to Mount Ellen. This was the mansion of Leopold Armytage Harding, "The Hermit," as he was called, because of his recluseness. A man of middle age, reported to be stern of character, disliking the world generally, and being disliked by the local world, where he was regarded with suspicion and distrust because of what were styled his "dark" ways, and because the sources of his income, which maintained a large mansion to which but little land was attached, were unknown.

On the way Paddy endeavoured to draw the "black stranger" into conversation, but all his interrogatories and commentaries were met with merely a turn of the head, and what he thought was a gaze that seemed to enquire how he dared to speak uninvited.

The entrance gate was reached, and they had proceeded some paces up the avenue, when Paddy was startled—so startled that he involuntarily brought the horse to a standstill—on hearing in clear, hard tones from his passenger the exclamation:

"I shall get down here and walk up. You may go back!" suiting the action to the words, and jumping off the car, leaving Paddy gazing, as far as the darkness would permit, in astonishment at the retreating figure.

The next morning Carrigmagrone was convulsed on learning that the Hermit of Mount Ellen had been found dead in his study, stabbed down through the left shoulder. The "black stranger," whose passing through Carrigmagrone the previous evening was largely canvassed, was immediately associated with the crime, and the police expected to bring the murderer to book immediately.

Paddy was, of course, the first to hear the news. In fact, he met the errand-boy from Mount Ellen on his way to inform the police, and before the good folk of his adopted town could recover from their consternation, or the police could bring to an end their cross-questioning of the errand-boy, who knew nothing beyond the fact of the murder, Paddy was well on his way to the scene of the tragedy.

Arrived there he was admitted to the

study, and saw the body sitting rigidly in a large chair, the dagger still fixed a little in front of the middle line of the left shoulder, and near the neck, the line of the hilt forming an angle with the line of the neck.

Paddy was naturally awestruck at the sight. Almost mechanically he approached the body, his eyes fixed on the dagger-head which protruded over the shoulder. The handle was silvered and the guards of the hilt were carved. Paddy was fascinated by this dagger. He seemed, as he afterwards related, to take in every detail, but could not speak a word. There was no indication of a struggle. Everything around was undisturbed. But Paddy saw a small piece of jagged skin, a fleshy particle, adhering to one of the curves of the hilt guard. The hand that perpetrated the foul deed must have been excoriated. Paddy rushed out of the room and stood gasping at the hall door. The ghastly sight and the fact that he had discovered a clue excited him almost to frenzy. He remained outside the door until the police came, and then after following them through all the details of their tedious investigation of the surroundings, he left towards evening, and went on his way home.

Paddy had travelled about half the distance back when he was accosted by a tall, loosely-built old woman, whose grey hair, all dishevelled, gathered wildly out from beneath the shawl which partly covered her head and drooped over her shoulders.

"Is that you, Peggy Diskin?" ejaculated Paddy.

"It's me, Paudh, an' I'm glad to see ye. I'm waitin' for ye. Yer wanted at me cabin. Winnie's there."

"What! Winnie Malone is it you mane?" exclaimed Paddy.

"Troth, an' it is, poor colleen. She's wid me since her shame came on her; an' now she's dyin'. She wanted you—an' whisper, Paddy—she says you wor kind to her poor ould father at the time of his 'viction, an' she knows you're good at heart, an' wants you to look after her little boy—only born a while ago."

"Is it ravin' you are, woman?" cried out Paddy. "Sure you don't mane to say that Winnie Malone has come to misfortune?" The sweet, innocent little girl that I often dangled on me knee! Tare an' ages, woman, you're mad."

"No, Paddy, agra, I'm not mad; an' sore's the day for poor Winnie, the

dacentest, honestest colleen that ever lived; an' the villain that——"

"Do you know who he is?" demanded Paddy fiercely.

"Felix Synnott."

"What? The Hermit's steward?"

"Yis."

"Well, if ever I lay hand on him—an' although he has levanted to America his ruination will follow him—I'll—— But," broke in Paddy in the midst of his threat of vengeance, "let's be quick. The poor girl is all alone an' she dyin', glory be to Heaven this night. Hurry on, Peggy."

Paddy entered Peggy Diskin's humble abode, a lone, small cottage lying hidden in a large grove; formerly a shepherd's hut in which Diskin lived, and where his widow remained. In an inner room was a bed on which lay a beautiful young girl seemingly asleep, her thick golden hair spread out on the coarse but clean white sheet, and forming a bright aureole round the face, whose cheeks were flushed with two pinky spots that indicated the fever. Her eyes opened as Paddy entered. She seemed to recognise him and to smile. Paddy's heart "rushed up into his throat," and he stood hesitatingly near the door. The girl raised her hand gently up as if to beckon Paddy to come near. As she did so, Paddy nearly shrieked aloud. He saw that the under portion of her hand had been rudely torn. He felt then that he knew who was the betrayer of poor Winnie Malone, and also knew who had stabbed the Hermit of Mount Ellen to death with his own dagger.

Many of the good folk of Carrigmagrone will aver that the Hermit was done to death by the "ould boy" in the guise of the "black stranger"; but Paddy is in the possession of a black wig and beard which would indicate that recluses may sometimes appear in public under a disguise.

### CONCERNING KNOCKERS.

WHEN or by whom the knocker was invented, we have found it impossible to ascertain. There is no reference to it in any of the British Museum papyri; nor do we find it figured on the Egyptian monuments. It was probably an evolution of comparatively recent times. So long as men dwelt in tents, to which admission was gained by the simple process of drawing aside a curtain, knockers, it is evident,

were not required. When they began to build themselves houses for the sake of greater privacy, more domestic enjoyment, or, perhaps, of security, no doubt some means of communication with the world without was found desirable; and a slave or domestic was stationed on the threshold to receive all comers. In the Roman vestibule an intruder was warned off by the device of a mosaic figure of a dog let into the pavement, with the legend "*Cave canem*"—"Beware of the dog!"—a warning not unknown in our own days and country. At houses where no porter was kept a caller probably made known his presence by the application of his fists, his feet, or his stick to the wooden or iron door. In the colder regions of Europe, and in countries exposed to "the shocks of war" or the raids of robbers, when a stout and massive gate or door was necessary as a protection and a defence, the visitor must have experienced no little difficulty in making himself known. When the Black Knight, in "*Ivanhoe*," discovered in the forest glade the hermitage of Friar Tuck, he had to assail its door with the butt of his lance in order to arouse attention and gain admittance. When a knightly company approached the castle of a brother knight, they seem always to have wound a horn as a kind of "*Open Sesame*!" But as society settled down and law and order spread their influence over the community, it is obvious that the want of some more facile and convenient mode of communication between the outsiders and the insiders would be more and more keenly felt; and such a want was sure to be sooner or later supplied. If any antiquarian authority should select the twelfth century as the period in which the knocker became a fact, we should feel no disposition to gainsay him. In its earlier stages we can well believe that it was much more useful than handsome, and that the chief object of its designer was to ensure that its reverberations should be distinctly audible. Probably it owed its artistic developments to the good taste of the workers in metal in the great Flemish cities; where, to this day, may be seen many a striking example of original design and effective workmanship in the knocker.

The doors of our old abbeys and religious houses were furnished with knockers of ample size—like the "brazen nose" knocker from which, it is said, a certain famous college at Oxford takes its name—so that their sounds rang through

court and corridor, carrying conviction to all within their reach. In romantic stories we often read of the dismal sensations caused by such formidable echoes in troublous times—when, for all the poor monks knew, the knocking might be that of a King's messenger, with an imperious demand for a new benevolence; or of a neighbouring Baron's steward, with an angry complaint of the trespassing of the monastic cattle. In the towns every burgher's house was equipped with the useful knocker, its dimensions and adornment being regulated by the burgher's social pretensions. Huge was the knocker suspended to the city gate, which many a proud mediæval city, on the coming of its sovereign or over-lord, would close in assertion of its feudal privileges, nor open it until, after assiduous application at the knocker, those privileges had been recognised. Our readers will remember that, down to a comparatively recent date, a similar ceremonial was observed at Temple Bar on the occasion of a Royal visit to London City.

In the drama and in fiction excellent use has often been made of the knocker. We bethink ourselves of a powerful modern novel in which the hero is saved from the commission of a great crime by a sudden knocking at the door—and the arrival of his aunt from the country. Inexhaustible amusement, too, has been derived from the way in which different people handle it—some shyly and furtively, some aggressively, some plausibly, some ostentatiously, others almost supplicatingly. All this belongs to the physiology of knocking, which might well bear scientific exposition. But as to the electric bell, it has no physiology! The pressure on the knob is meaningless—the work of a moment; it elicits no scintillation of a man's personality. You may press a score of knobs without any self-revelation, whereas your mode of handling a single knocker would expose you to a keen observer. So it comes to pass that the effect of a knocker is worth careful study. The jangle of a bell provokes the hearer to drop into bad language—and that is all. One never hears of a man's deeper emotions being roused by a door-bell; but with a knocker it is very much otherwise! Its "note" is distinctly one of remembrance. You cannot forget it; the sound lives long in your memory, as Shelley says of the odour of the violet, and recalls the circumstances under which you heard it.

Thus, in "Macbeth," after Duncan's murder, the guilty Thane and his not less guilty wife are disturbed by a sudden knocking.

"Whence is that knocking?" cries Macbeth; "wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!"

And, afterwards, when Lady Macbeth is in her somnambullistic trance, she remembers that ominous sound:

"To bed, to bed! there's knocking at the gate!"

There is this further to be said about the knocker, that it connected itself with a man's personality in so intimate a way as strongly and clearly to make it known to others. We sat in our drawing-room or library, and said to each other: "That is Lord Verisoph's knock!" "That must be Montague Tigg; I know his knock!" "That is papa's knock, dear!" In the old days such instances of the transference of the human personality to the knocker were very general. It is curious, but true, that whole classes and professions of men were formerly distinguished by a characteristic use of the knocker. There was the imperious and far-resounding knock of James de la Pluche as representative of Lady Bareacres. There was the smart application of Captain Sabretache. There was the insinuating knock of Dr. Squills. There was the dignified and ecclesiastical knock of Bishops, Deans, and Archdeacons; and the grave and measured, yet less dignified, knock of clergy below the archidiaconal grade. Of course there was also the well-known double knock, the rapid rat-tat of Her Majesty's letter-carriers—a sound full of import, on which some of our best writers have descanted with affecting sentiment and pathetic eloquence—which, moreover, has been celebrated by the sister arts of Poesy and Music!

Finally, not a little might be said on the æsthetic side of our subject; on the variety of form and ornament in the knocker, and its adaptability to the wants of different social grades. What a contrast, for instance, between the stately and even pompous knocker that adorned the aristocratic doorways in Belgravia—fashioned, perhaps, like a lion's or a griffin's head—solid, weighty, imposing; and the ugly bit of rusty iron, with a knob at the end of it, which hung suspended on the narrow doors of, let us say, "Stratford-atte-Bowe"! A considerable amount of ingenuity and fancy was at one time expended on this useful appliance; and

not infrequently the design attained a high standard of artistic excellence. This, perhaps, was the reason why, in bygone days, young noblemen and others afflicted with the collector's mania, made nocturnal expeditions in order to get together the largest possible number of specimens. To such a mode of procedure exception might justly be taken on the score of morality; but, as inspired by a love of art, it seems scarcely to call for severe condemnation. Alas! before the aggression of the electric bell the knocker is so rapidly and generally disappearing, that no fine examples will be left for the future collector, in however scrupulous a manner he may wish to acquire them.

## "OUTLAWED."

A SHORT SERIAL.

### CHAPTER XIII.

BETWEEN one and two that night Gilbert Egerton went into the hall. He had changed his dress-coat for a smoking-jacket, but though he had retired to his own rooms two hours ago, he had made no preparations to go to rest. The house had been shut up rather earlier than usual that night, the change for the better in Mr. Egerton's condition giving the whole household a sense of relief. By this time every one, with the exception of the patient and his night-watchers, was in bed.

Gilbert had resolved to speak to his brother. But before seeking him in the underground chamber, cut off from sight and sound of the house, he went first to see if Wilfred should be again playing in his fool's masquerade in the house itself, where, though all the occupants were fast asleep, still, at a sound, should their help be needed, they would come hastening. There was a curious livid pallor about his mouth. It was brought there by the thought of a possible meeting with his brother, in the loneliness of the night in that isolated, underground prison-house, with no other human soul near to act as a check on the passions that meeting would call into play.

In his heart was a horrible doubt of his own powers of self-control. Instinctively he sheltered himself under the sense of restraint given by even the sleeping presence of those other people.

The house, downstairs, except where here and there the moonlight fell through

a window, was in darkness. He carried no light, not wishing to be seen by any other member of the household who might by accident be up. He divined that Wilfred would probably keep to that portion of the house which was said to have been more particularly haunted by the ghost-monk. The brutal callousness of the whole affair sickened while it enraged him. That his brother should have chosen to screen himself under such a guise—at this time of all others—seemed incredible.

Apart from the folly and risk of frightening a set of silly, ignorant, and already over-excited servants, to deliberately choose, when his father lay at the point of death, the fantastic guise worn, according to superstitious tradition, by the old harbinger of death, was as cruel as it was base. At least, if his imprisonment had become unendurable, he might have found some other mode of enjoying a temporary freedom.

But why should he enter the house at all? Why should he not have remained satisfied with the brief night visits into the grounds near his hiding-place, which, ever since he had been strong enough, they had agreed he might take, with proper precautions?

But even this had been at a terrible risk to all concerned, not only to himself but to those who were sheltering him.

Gilbert reached the archway through which the corridor leading from his own suite of rooms merged into the great centre hall. The moonlight fell through an oriel window facing him, but the side by which he entered was in darkness.

A figure in armour stood inside the hall, near the archway. As he reached it he suddenly remembered something.

That afternoon, while he and Hope and his mother sat at tea in the hall, Hope had in jest taken a white rose from her belt and fastened it into the coat of mail.

The armour had been worn by one of their ancestors, and it was said that he had loved and wooed a lady at Court who had promised him that if she ever learned to care for him in return, she would give him a white rose. But she carried her pride and coquetry too far. He was assassinated one night by a rival, and the white rose never came to him. The story was a favourite one of Hope's, and the white roses she was wearing that afternoon recalled it to her.

"Perhaps the rose wasn't worth waiting for, after all, if he had only known!" she



said, glancing up at the armed figure. "I dare say she was horrid, and vain, and proud. But I like to think, too, that she might have grown different when she learned at last to care for him. For I am sure she did. Such faithfulness as his must have conquered in the end, and if they had not murdered him the rose would have come to him after all. I will give him one now, so if his ghost walks to-night, he will think she put it there."

Gilbert Egerton raised his hand now in the darkness, and took the rose from his dead ancestor's coat of mail.

"His faithfulness must have conquered in the end." He repeated her words dully to himself. "I do not care!" and the fire burst up in his heart again. "I will win her, if I die for it!"

As he flung out his hand with a fierce gesture, he accidentally struck the armour, jarring it, and causing it to make a faint clanking sound, which in the deep stillness of the night echoed through the hall.

A figure waiting at the foot of the staircase, in the deeper shadow cast by a cluster of tall palms and ferns, started and turned in the direction of the archway.

As Gilbert, still only dimly seen in the darkness, advanced into the hall, the figure by the staircase swiftly raised its arm. But as Gilbert passed into the moonlight the figure, cowed and cloaked, stepped noiselessly out of the shadows, and moved towards him.

"It's rash of you coming on a fellow without warning," said the deep musical voice, and Wilfred Egerton significantly raised his hand again. It held a revolver. "In my unlucky position I can't always wait to see first who it is. It's a shooting 'at sight' between Dornton and me."

Gilbert looked at his brother, speechless for a second.

A patch of moonshine lay on the floor where they stood, and in the luminous dusk they could see each other's faces. It struck Gilbert that the ghost-monk might have presented some such appearance to human eyes as Wilfred Egerton did. The pale face, the cowl casting a deeper shadow on the dark, wicked eyes, might have been those of the old monk himself, condemned by tradition to expiate his sins on the spot where the monastery in which he had committed sacrilege once stood.

"I came to prevent you playing the fool," Gilbert said hoarsely. "If you have no respect for our father, whom you have perhaps driven to death, nor thought for

the suffering of our mother, you might at least think of the risk you are bringing on us all by the chattering of the servants."

A curious look crossed Wilfred's face.

"I am beginning to think that even a brush with Dornton would be welcome as a break to the deathly dreariness of that underground hole," he said.

But he had lowered his voice, and he gave a quick glance up in the direction of the gallery.

He made a movement which necessitated his brother turning, so that he stood with his back almost to it.

"It comes well from you to speak of it like that!" said Gilbert very bitterly. "You seem to forget how others endure it for your sake. Heaven help them!" raising his voice a little in his excitement.

Wilfred cast a quick glance at his brother.

"It is very good of them," he said slowly, in the same subdued tone, "a good deal more than I deserve, you are thinking, and you are quite right. But Miss Brown is an angel."

Gilbert made a threatening step forward. "It's about her, too, I want to warn you," he said in a choked voice. "If you forget that she is my father's guest, and amuse yourself at her expense, and cost her even so much as a day's heartache, I shall make it my business to see that you render account of it."

As they stood the moonlight touched Gilbert's face, while Wilfred's, darkened further by the monk's cowl, was in shadow. He looked at his brother for a second.

"Even should I have any intention of aspiring to win Miss Brown," he said in his deep, slow tones, "you seem to forget that Mr. Brown himself would have to be taken into consideration. And knowing him as I do, he would certainly not consider me a fit match for his daughter," and he laughed slightly.

"And he would be right. She had better marry an honest man on the other side of the counter, any day, than a blackguard like you!"

Mrs. Page's suggestion rankled like a poisoned dart in his heart. The enigmatical smile on his brother's lips, the dark eyes watching him from under the cowl, goaded him out of all self-control.

Something devilish in its mockery flashed from Wilfred's eyes. But he still spoke so that his tones should not be caught by any possible listening ears in the silent house.



"I am sorry if I am interfering between you and any intentions you may have in the matter yourself. Miss Brown would make even a suitable wife for a Gilbert Egerton."

"Not if you had made love to her first. Miss Brown is no fit wife for me if she has listened willingly to one love-word from you!"

The words cut like the flash of a steel blade through the stillness and silence that reigned in the hall, reaching the gallery above, where as they struck her a dumb, inarticulate cry—the agony of a woman's shame and anger—broke from Hope, who stood concealed behind a marble statue near the head of the staircase.

Wilfred Egerton looked away from his brother for a second, then he turned back to him.

"You villain!" he said in a hard, hoarse voice, which he troubled no longer to suppress.

For another second Gilbert stared back at him stupidly. The cold, white fury that had possessed him a moment before had died out suddenly, killed by the brutality of his own speech.

Then he turned on his heel and walked away.

Wilfred, standing in the moonshine that fell through the oriel window into the hall, a strange, incongruous figure, touched by the old monk dress with a suggestion of mystery, looked after him till he disappeared through the archway.

That his own position was full of danger, standing as he was distinctly outlined against the darker background; that their voices, particularly Gilbert's, incautiously raised as it had been in his rage, might have attracted attention, did not stir his pulses into quicker beating. Physical fear he did not know. He waited till his quick ear caught a faint sound from the gallery above. Then he turned and walked towards the staircase. But before he could reach it Hope had stepped out of her hiding-place and vanished down the gallery.

Perhaps she made some little half-unconscious sign to him as she crossed the head of the staircase. It was darker up there than in the hall, and she was but a dimly-defined shape herself in the gloom. But it seemed to him that she made a half-appealing gesture to him from the head of the staircase, and he obeyed it.

She would not keep the tryst they had

made that night. In a spirit of girlish mischief and daring, half-frightened at the recklessness of it, but yielding at last to the risk for the sake of relieving the tedium of his miserable imprisonment, she had consented to meet him that night, in the hall, as soon as the rest of the household had retired.

She did not know that this was the third visit which he had already paid to the house. She had conscientiously remonstrated with him, but he had laughed at her fears for his safety. He had told her that if she wished it he would raise the old ghost-monk, who had formerly haunted the house, for her special benefit.

She had just arrived on the scene when Gilbert had appeared.

Wilfred Egerton was disappointed. He had needed Hope's assistance in a little plot which he desired to carry out for his own escape and future welfare. He was growing tired of waiting for his brother's aid. Besides, the conditions, whatever they were, attached to his help would certainly be unwelcome.

For the moment his own plans were baffled, and he went back to his underground prison, his face pale with the malignant despair and baffled rage that might once have looked out of the eyes of the monk who was said to have sold his soul to the devil, and after the fashion of such one-sided transactions, lost the game.

"She won't give me the chance again!" he said.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

It was true. Rude and hateful as the shock of the awakening had been, it still opened Hope's eyes to the folly to which she had committed herself. It was a different thing going by the sanction and wish of his mother to visit the prisoner, and help to cheer his solitude. But to assist him in such mad recklessness as this, to make clandestine meetings with him in the dead of night, to run the risk herself of being discovered with him at such a time, was a different matter. She wondered, as she lay miserably awake for the rest of the night, how she could ever have thought of such a thing.

In the way in which he had put it, it had seemed, with the exception of the great risk he himself ran, nothing but an amusing and exciting adventure.

The fierce passion of Gilbert, his coarse brutality of speech, seemed to have transformed a half-childish freak into an unmaidenly thing.

She hated herself and him, and Wilfred, as she lay sleepless in the dark with wide, burning eyes. It was her first experience of personal shame, her first acquaintance with the evil interpretation the world can give to an innocent act.

No! She did not hate Wilfred Egerton. Wicked as he may have been, he had never once made her feel like this. It was his very gentleness of courtesy which had removed all self-consciousness from her.

She would have met him to-night as frankly and simply as she would have met her brother.

After to-night—her cheeks flushed scarlet in the darkness. How could she face him again?

And, perhaps—why—he might be despising her, too, for having consented to such an adventure. He might think her hoydenish, unwomanly. Suddenly this thought seemed to her more intolerable than any that had gone before.

With a stifled cry she buried her face in the pillows. But slowly into her self-tormentings a new faith in Wilfred Egerton grew up, bringing her a vague comfort. It was founded on the courteous respect he had always shown her, on his gentleness and kindness.

He would not despise her, knowing as he must do that she had acted only in innocence, silly though her conduct had been. He, too, had seen no harm in the escapade. Only Gilbert—if he had discovered her there! How she hated him! She fell asleep at last and dreamed of the wicked ghost-monk. She thought she was in the picture gallery. It was night, and she was there all alone. Down the centre of the gallery lay a broad streak of ghastly, livid-looking light. She could not tell where it came from, nor did it seem to lighten any other part of the gallery except that broad line down the centre of the polished floor, radiating with a pale illumination into the air. A few feet above it the darkness was so thick, that it seemed to hang like a funeral pall between that ghostly light and the picture-lined walls.

And as she stood at one end of the gallery, just at the point where the livid light was blotted out in strange and dreadful suddenness by the surrounding blackness, she saw a brown-cloaked and cowed figure, walking towards her from the farther end down that path of light.

She could see it distinctly, even to the girdle of knotted cord round the waist.

But the head was bent, and the cowl drawn over it hid the face completely from her sight.

Half-mad with fear, for in her dream she seemed to know that if the dead monk touched her she would be his for ever, she tried to fly and could not stir. But the cowed figure stopped within a yard or two from her and raised his head. And she saw the face of Wilfred Egerton, white and worn, with the dreadful sadness in his burning eyes.

"I love you," he said, in the deep sweet tones that could stir her as no human voice had ever yet moved her. "But you do not love me. You had the chance of redeeming my soul, and you failed me. You held the key of my salvation in your hand, and flung it away—and now—it is too late. See!"

And as she looked, she saw that the light had faded behind him, and that the horrible thick darkness was closing in on him on every side, till his figure was only dimly outlined in that strange ghastly gleam that seemed now to emanate in some mysterious way from his own personality.

And as he slowly faded from her sight the spell that held her speechless, powerless, was broken, and with a cry she sprang forward towards the place where he stood, and she awoke. She opened her eyes to see the summer morning sunlight falling into her room, and Sophie, Mrs. Egerton's maid, who was attending on her in the absence of her own, stood by her bedside with the early morning tea.

"Mais, mademoiselle! But you must have been dreaming horrid!" exclaimed the French maid, in the odd mixture of French and perverted English idiom on which she prided herself. "You had the look of one horribly frightened while you was sleeping."

"I was 'horriblement' frightened!" said the girl, as she passed her handkerchief across her brow, on which the pretty straying curls of hair lay damp from the clammy moisture which had gathered there. And as she drank her tea, her mind went over the dream with its queer, grotesque confusion of the events and ideas of the previous evening.

When the maid left the room, she felt under her pillow for the key that was hidden there. It was safe; but its touch brought the scarlet flush to her cheeks again.

She would have to take back the key to its usual place, in Mrs. Egerton's

dressing-room. It would be awkward if it were missed before she had replaced it.

It belonged to the picture gallery, which was locked every night, because there was a communication between it and Mr. Egerton's study below, in which stood his strong safe. The communication was a portion of the secret staircase leading to the priest's room.

Since Mr. Egerton's illness, the picture gallery had not been opened every day, and the key could be taken from the dressing-room with less risk of being missed.

Hope, at Wilfred's jesting instigation, had taken the key the previous evening, and had brought it with her when she came to meet him. They were to visit the picture gallery, which had been a favourite walk of the ghost-monk, while, when the moon was in a certain position, there was a curious effect of light and shade on one of the old family portraits to be seen, and with which Hope, as yet, had never been able to make acquaintance, the moon till now not having been favourable. The portrait, dark and indistinct with age, was that of the knight to whom the white rose had never come. As the moonlight touched the lips at a certain angle, they seemed to smile.

Hope could not help feeling a little amusement now, as she thought over the queer fantasy which evidently had woven the idea of the picture-gallery key into the harsh, despairing reproach of Wilfred Egerton in her dream.

But when, on her way downstairs to breakfast, she slipped into Mrs. Egerton's dressing-room, to replace the key unseen by any one, the intended adventure, which she had at first thought of as an innocent secret, again took a tinge of unpleasantness.

"It really almost feels as if I had been helping in a burglary," she said, half-angry, half-smiling, and still very much ashamed, as she went on her way downstairs. "And it all comes of making mysteries about nothing. Really, I can't see why Mr. Wilfred should have told me not to let any one know that we were going on such an absurd adventure! And I am sure I don't know why I was so silly as to bind myself by unnecessary promises. Only I seem now to be promising things before I know what I have done."

The thought of facing Gilbert, even though he had no idea that she had overheard his speech, was intolerable.

Happily he had breakfasted, and she

and Mrs. Egerton were alone. Mrs. Egerton looked brighter than she had done for some time. Mr. Egerton still maintained the improvement of yesterday.

"And Gilbert's friend has returned to England, and everything will soon be arranged now, I think," she said to Hope. "And, my dear, I am afraid we have been selfish, and allowed you to be too much in that dreary underground place. You must not go there at all to-day; you are looking quite pale. You must keep out of doors all day."

Hope was glad enough not to have to face Wilfred Egerton.

After breakfast she started to walk to Eason's cottage. She had been several times to enquire after him, and to take some little extra dainty to tempt his appetite.

He was well cared for, and his niece came up every day to fetch what was needed, or else some one went from the house to the cottage.

Mrs. Page had taken it into her head that the niece was something of a gossip, and had begun to object to her coming so much to the house.

As Hope was passing through the chase she caught sight of Gilbert Egerton coming towards her. There was an imperceptible pause on both sides, then they advanced simultaneously. It would have been difficult to find a prettier picture that morning than Hope Brown, as she passed through summer sunlight and shadow under the green foliage of the trees.

The young man advancing to meet her was conscious of her fairness and sweetness in every nerve and heart-throb. She had flushed crimson on seeing him, but she was pale enough when they met, and had not he been too blinded by the consciousness of her beauty and winsomeness, he might have read danger in the set, proud mouth, and disdain in the grey eyes. But he saw nothing—only that she was fair, and the one woman who could satisfy his heart and soul.

He noticed with keen remorse and trouble that she had grown thinner and more delicate-looking.

"Good morning," he said; "are you going as far as Eason's cottage? Let me carry that basket, it is too heavy for you on such a hot morning."

It only contained fruit. But any excuse was good enough to give him the chance of speaking to her.

"Thank you," she said stiffly. "But it is no weight at all," and she passed on.

He turned and went with her. But she felt that she could not endure his presence.

"Really, Mr. Egerton," she said with a forced carelessness, contradicted by the brightness of her eyes, "I do not want an escort, and I believe, Mr. Cowan"—Mr. Egerton's land agent—"is waiting to see you at the house."

"I saw him only yesterday, and he can't want me very urgently," he said, trying, too, to speak with his old indolent slowness, "and if you would allow me, I should like to accompany you."

Her eyes flashed, and she stopped.

"But I do not want you. I suppose you will not insist on coming if that is the case?"

"Certainly not!" with a slight laugh, though he paled a little as he stepped back.

Then, driven by who could tell what madness, overwhelmed by the thought of the way in which they had sacrificed her to the service of the outcast son, he caught her hand and kissed it.

"Mr. Egerton!" The next second she had struck the hand he had kissed against the tree under which they were standing. "How dare you—oh!" The words choked in her throat, and she turned from him and hurried on.

In her passion her hand was bruised and wounded, but she felt no pain. It was deadened by the intolerable insult of his kiss. It was with that insult still burning in her heart that, an hour later, she met Wilfred Egerton.

She passed the summer-house in the wilderness on her way back to the house. It was the path she usually took coming and going to Eason's cottage.

Wilfred Egerton knew this.

As she came out now, between the trees, into the opening before the old summer-house, to her dismay and alarm she saw, standing there in the full daylight, Wilfred Egerton himself.

In her fear for his safety she lost sense for the instant of the awkwardness of the meeting.

He was standing by the steps of the summer-house, the door of which stood open behind him.

As he caught sight of her he came forward to meet her.

"Oh, Mr. Egerton! Please go back! How could you? It is selfish of you!" she exclaimed, indignant, breathless. "You should think of the others, if you don't care for yourself!"

"I came to see you," he said, and something in the dark, unsmiling face brought back all the previous evening, and paling and quivering at the memory of it she drew back a step. But she could still think of the peril he was running. "My mother told me a little while ago that you had gone out," he said, unheeding her remonstrance, "and I guessed you would return this way. She told me, too, that I should not see you to-day. I could not wait till to-morrow, or perhaps the next day, perhaps never see you again, for I may have to leave at any moment, now. I wanted to tell you something. I have no right to say it. I love you, Miss Brown. If I can make anything decent of the rest of my life, do you think you could forgive me any trouble or annoyance I have unwillingly brought on you?"

She looked at him, flushing and paling, dumb, bewildered, and frightened.

It was the first time that she had seen him in the full light of day. As the morning sunlight fell on it, she saw how worn and lined the face was. There was something almost death-like in the yellowish white of the skin, caused by suffering and confinement in his unhealthy prison, while the sad eyes seemed to read down into her very heart.

"Oh!" she cried uncertainly. "If you would only go back." From the distance came the sound of approaching voices. "Oh, please go back!" in an agony of terror. "They will find you—then—oh! what should I do?"

And the secret of her heart broke out in the pathetic, passionate cry.

"My darling!" with a quick step to her side, and catching her hands in his, he lifted them, holding them to his heart for a second. "For your sake—I will go! There is something to live for now. Good-bye—dearest!"

And she stood there alone in a world full of sunshine, where sorrow and sighing were not known; where there was no death—only the wonderful, illimitable life of love.

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